

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 37

INTRODUCED BY WILLIAMS

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING A STUDY OF THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM IN MONTANA.

WHEREAS, the child protective services system is a complex system involving children and families, schools, law enforcement, county attorneys, district courts, guardians ad litem, court-appointed special advocates, the Department of Public Health and Human Services, Indian tribes, and the federal government; and

WHEREAS, numerous federal and state audits have found many deficiencies in the system, yet changes to the system have been slow and the necessary resources to implement the changes have yet to be committed; and

WHEREAS, numerous pieces of legislation have been introduced illustrating the need for change within the child protective services system, such as legislation regarding the professionalization of social workers employed by the Department of Public Health and Human Services, the need for a child and family ombudsman, the need for adequate counsel for families in the system, the need for treatment courts, and the need for further involvement of extended families; and

WHEREAS, children and families involved in child protective services are members of communities and need community involvement outside of the department for prevention and community support may serve the best interests of the child and the child's family; and

WHEREAS, an analysis of the child protective services system that brings safety and permanency to the forefront to provide greater prevention services and community involvement is warranted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to study the child protective services system in Montana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee review the entire system from the initial call regarding

1 an allegation of abuse or neglect and the effectiveness of the centralized intake system to the availability of
2 prevention services and mediation, the child's voice in the process, the level of desired community involvement,
3 and the potential reallocation of resources with safety and permanency at the forefront.

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
5 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
7 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2006.

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
9 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 60th Legislature.

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